



Brainerd Public Schools

Opportunity. Innovation. Success.

CONTACT:

KARLA SAND

District Communications Manager

Washington Educational Services Building

804 Oak Street

Brainerd, MN 56401

Office: (218) 454-6900

communications@isd181.org

www.ISD181.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Blueprint 181

Investing. Growing. Leading.

Majority of ISD181 Residents Support Development of a Long-Range School Facilities Plan *School Board Needs Community Input to Develop the Right Plan*

BRAINERD, Minn. – October 30, 2017 – A large majority of residents support the efforts by Brainerd Public Schools to develop a long-range facilities plan to address space, health, safety and security issues within area schools. Seventy-seven percent of respondents to a scientific telephone survey agreed that the School Board should develop a long-range plan to make improvements in school buildings, while only 19 percent disagreed.

This finding was publicly released at a special public meeting of the School Board tonight. Morris Leatherman, a survey research firm headquartered in Minneapolis, conducted the survey of 400 residents in late September and early October. Todd Rapp, a consultant working with the school district on the long-range facilities plan, reported the results of the survey and a companion unscientific Internet survey taken by more than 1300 area residents earlier this month.

In both surveys, respondents were asked a variety of questions about their perceptions of Brainerd Public Schools, what they believe is most needed in local schools, and how those needs should be addressed. The primary differences between the surveys is in the way that people are chosen – any resident with access to a computer could take the Internet survey, while the telephone survey included a scientifically valid sample of residents that reflects the demographics of ISD 181's residents. As a result, parents made up a majority of respondents to the online survey, while they were only one-third of the scientific telephone survey.

“These two surveys provide very useful information about the value that families receive from our schools,” said ISD School Board Chair Bob Nystrom. “They have also helped us understand our greatest needs in the areas of



Brainerd Public Schools

Opportunity. Innovation. Success.

safe and secure buildings, meeting best practices for classroom instruction and other topics. Our work on a long-range plan continues to be shaped by input from local residents, whether through surveys such as these or the 100+ community meetings we have held in the last 6 months.”

The findings from the scientific telephone survey included:

- Respondents overwhelmingly believe that our community receives a good value from its investments in its public schools – 86 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.
- Eighty-nine percent of respondents rated teachers and other instructional staff good or excellent.
- School Administration earned a mark of good or excellent from 68 percent of respondents; for the School Board, 66 percent of respondents gave a good or excellent rating.
- When asked if the School Board does a good job of informing residents about the decisions it makes, 81 percent of residents agreed or strongly agreed.
- Seventy-seven percent of respondents believe the School Board makes decisions in the best interests of our students and their families.

Residents also provided input on which investments were the highest priority for funding in a long-range facilities plan. Members of the general public selected space for STEM education, special education, and workforce development needs as the most important of eleven options provided. However, the employees and parents who took the online survey rated career and technical education, school security, and technology access more highly.

“Even though the two surveys were conducted in different ways, together they provide a wealth of information that will help the School Board prioritize options for plan,” said Rapp. “For example, 81 percent of residents agreed that every elementary school should provide the same opportunities for students, regardless of where a family lives in the district. Equity has emerged as an important issue in designing the right plan.”

“Our goal is to gather input from as many community members as possible and we are extraordinarily grateful for the feedback we received from survey respondents,” said Laine Larson, Superintendent of Brainerd Public Schools. “While the School Board is considering expert facility analysis, previous planning reports, and information gathered from teachers and other school staff, they simply could not develop the right plan without this valuable input from so many district residents.”

Community residents are encouraged to visit www.blueprint181.org to review the survey presentation and obtain up-to-date news on the school facilities planning process. Residents may also share their thoughts by emailing the district at blueprint181@isd181.org or calling 218-454-6900.

TELEPHONE SURVEY: The study contains the results of a representative sample of 400 randomly selected residents in the Brainerd School District. Professional interviewers conducted the survey by telephone between September 26th and October 6th, 2017. The typical respondent took twenty-four minutes to complete the questionnaire. The results of the sample of 400 residents are projectable to all school district residents within $\pm 5.0\%$ in 95 out of 100 cases.

ONLINE SURVEY: The online survey was conducted between October 6th and October 18th, 2017 using *Survey Monkey*. 1,312 residents completed the survey, which typically took 8 minutes to complete. An invitation to take the survey was publicized in the Brainerd Dispatch, on local radio, in regular district email and social media communications, and in person at district meetings including community members.

###